

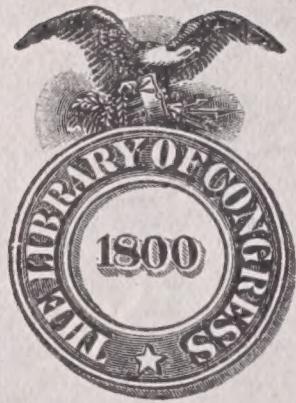
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MY LITTLE ARBUTUS FLOWER

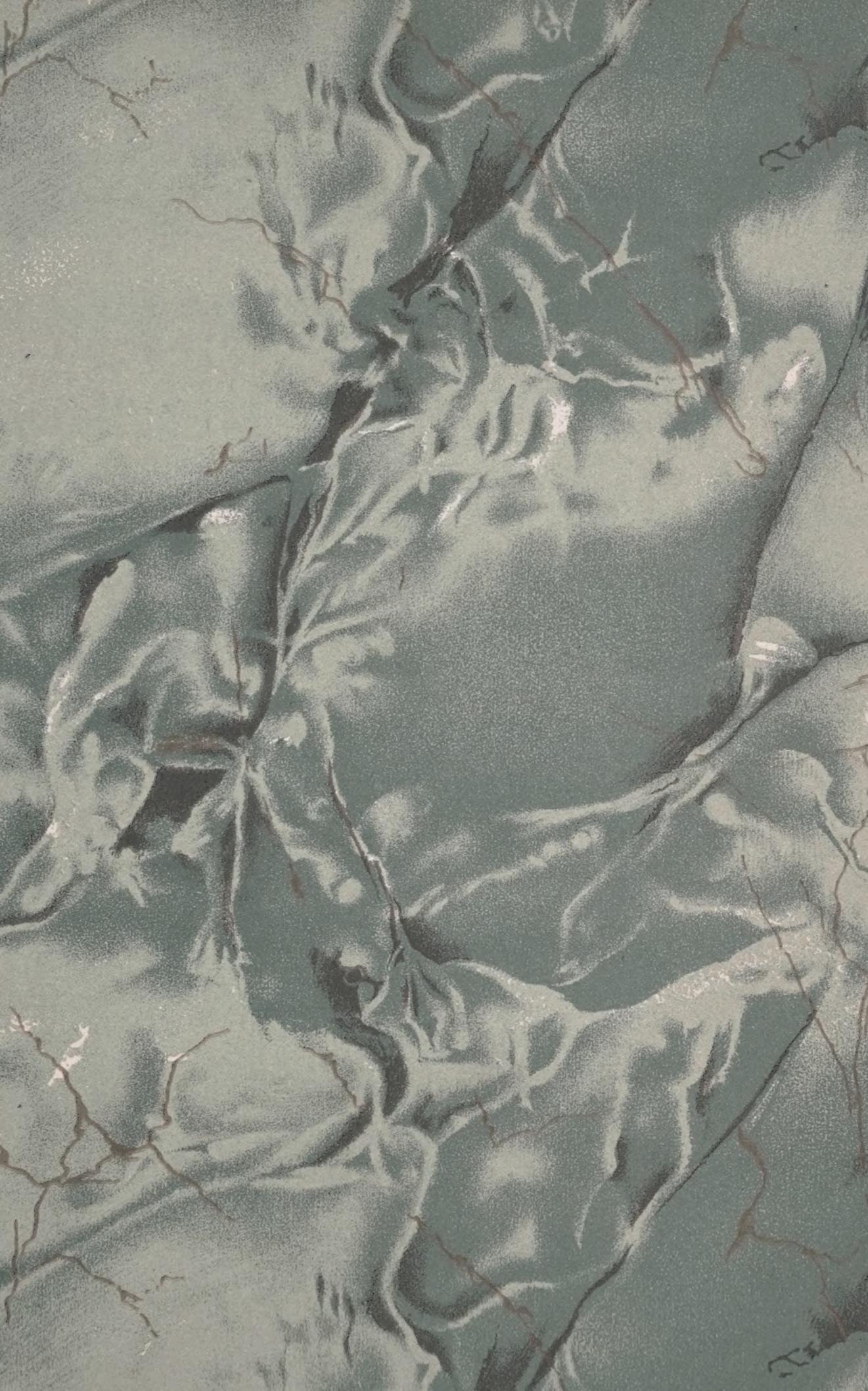


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BOOKS IN PREPARATION
by HARRIET BEECHER BENBOW

"The Greater Light"

"Letters from Mother to Son"

"Letters from Son to Mother"

"The Real Creation"

AND OTHERS

Harriet Beecher Benbow's Books
will give the scholar of good thoughts
many delightful and inspired
moments.



THOSE EYES LOOKED LIKE VIOLETS

MILDRED LYON

MY LITTLE ARBUTUS FLOWER

A TALE *from the* GREAT PINETREE REGIONS

By
HARRIET BEECHER BENBOW

Illustrated by
BETH ROSENKRANS
AND
MILDRED LYON



“JUST RIGHT BOOKS”

ALBERT WHITMAN COMPANY
CHICAGO ILLINOIS

MY LITTLE ARBUTUS FLOWER

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HARRIET BEECHER BENBOW

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JUL - 9 '21

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DEDICATED TO

My dearly beloved friend Marian Law Neff, whose friendship was a divine gift in the darkest hour of my life, and whose exalted character and sympathy was quick to grasp the author's meaning and help to bring this little story before the public.

To her these pages are inscribed
With the unforgetable love of

HARRIET BEECHER BENBOW.

“FOREWORD”

*Precious gems found in the deserts of
darkness shall we not inscribe them?*

*To find a lost diamond we must needs take
with us, a lamp.*

—*Harriet Beecher Benbow.*

WHEN BERNICE SOUGHT HER PROPER NICHE

“Mother, dear, I know not what to do next; I have tried so many things, but they all take me away from you all day, leaving me no time for helping you with the house-work, not to speak of keeping my own garments mended,—and not a minute do I have to read or practice my music which father spent so much to give me. Life seems so weary and unromantic, and while my heart is sad all day at having to leave you all alone,—I feel that I, too, am losing all the beauty and poetry of life, as well as meeting all day the bold faces of men, which a business girl’s work necessitates. I am getting discouraged with living”—

“Yes, daughter, I know all you say is true; I, too, have grieved much to see you growing less beautiful, less like your natu-

My Little Arbutus Flower

ral self,—having to go day after day out in the dirt and rain, cold and heat; being so weary at night, with all the delightful hours, of music and reading, gone."

"Do you think, mother, that I could write a good story? The world loves *good* stories; you know we do, and just now our magazine is offering a splendid price for short stories. Do you think I might just try evenings, and then, if I succeeded, we could be together? I feel just full of beautiful things, and so love to express them, and, too, I know so many wonderful stories from real life which I could build around, and they are so really interesting,—if I only thought I could please!"

Such was the conversation passing between Mrs. Blair and her daughter, Bernice, as they sat before a small gas grate, in their four-room, modern bunga-

When Bernice Sought Her Proper Niche

low. There was no other light, and the hour was approaching for them to retire for the night.

Mrs. Blair was one of those petite types of gracious womanhood. Her eyes were large and dark; her hair was parted smoothly, combed back and coiled on her neck. Tonight she was dressed in a royal purple velvet dressing gown, which fell in soft folds, while the dainty slipper of the same material peeped out from beneath, showing a small, classical foot. One hand fondly clasped that of her daughter, whose head of silken, blonde hair rested gently on the mother's shoulder. Bernice's gown of old-rose satin, as well as that of her mother, showed much wear,—but spoke of better days. It was a picture for an artist.

“Bernice, you have written some splen-

My Little Arbutus Flower

did, rarely pleasing things! Where is that tale of the West, your ‘Little Arbutus Flower,’ disclosing one of your life’s experiences, which you just jotted down, because it came so persistently into your mind as not to be put off?”

“Why, mother, I never thought of that. I have it put away with a number of other stories. You remember father thought that ought to be published,—‘it was so full of good,’ he said,—and as he wrote so many, many things, he ought to be a good judge, hadn’t he? Oh, if this would on’y bring me a prize, so I could stay at home, I would bring out some real stories for the world, mother, for I do so want to write. I’ll go and bring it, if you will wait up for an hour longer, mother,—you can rest tomorrow while I am gone.”

“No, it’s you, Bernice, you must have your rest.”

“Oh, no, mother, the thought, even, that perhaps I might earn enough to enable me

When Bernice Sought Her Proper Niche

to live at home with you, rests me more than that hour of sleep possibly could. I'll bring it in just a minute."

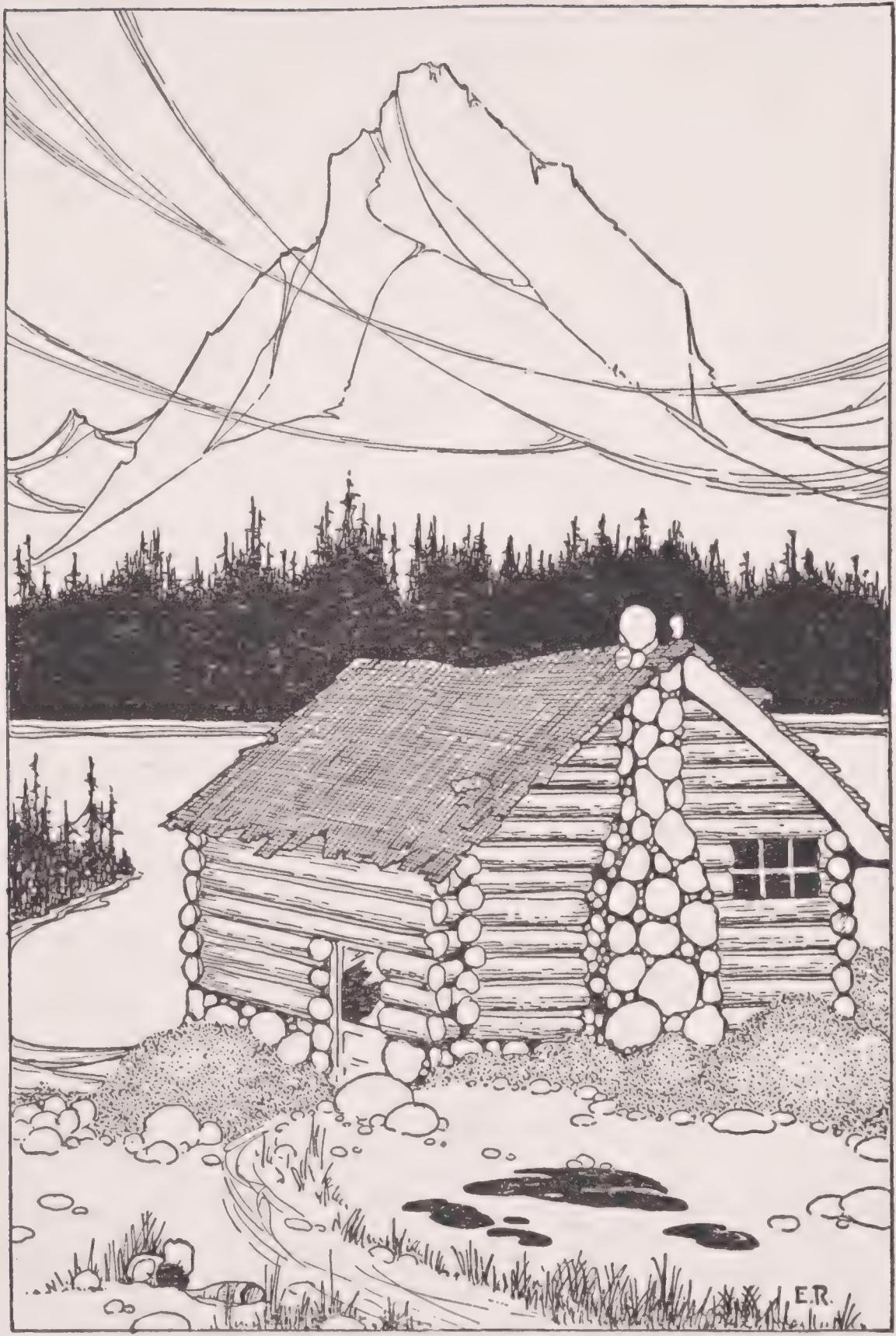
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"Here it is, mother. Listen, and please criticise. I'll just underscore your criticisms with this red pencil, and will try to hurry home tomorrow to prepare it for mailing. These editors must be kind-hearted men, to even give humanity a chance to express themselves naturally. I love natural rhyme in stories, always, and I believe most people do, for everyone has more or less poetry in his nature, and they need more of it, don't they, mother?"

"Yes, dear, but now proceed; it is getting to be near ten o'clock."

"Yes, mother," and folding her arms about Mrs. Blair's neck, Bernice gave her one long, tender kiss, and settled herself by her mother's side, to read her story, "My Arbutus Flower."

(Bernice reads her story.)



WHAT A HOUSE?

E.R.

FINDING THE BUD

The slums? did you say? Yes, I had visited the slums, that is, I had driven adown the streets of the slums in large cities; had read of them,—of the poor suffering lives therein; of the good Samaritan at work for their salvation,—often wishing I might be of help to some of those poor people,—yet did not expect that the call and the opportunity would come to me as they did, and when and where they did!

One day in a small mining town, “somewhere in America,” where you would never suspect a spot could get shady enough for a small slum, I found there was one; a wee, small one,—looking as though it might have been lifted in a cyclone, some bleak, stormy day, and had been set over in these hills, far from its native land. Anyway, the slum was there, and blacker than night was its color, too.

My Little Arbutus Flower

I was asked one day to go and see a poor lady; that she needed help so very badly, and my heart bounded with joy, so to do. Having been advised that she made beautiful embroidery, I had a suitable excuse for going, so one forenoon, quite soon after the request came, I started to the far east outskirt of the city to find this place.

A peculiar walk it was,—away down a winding street, over bridges, and past blacksmith shops, where the noise of the anvil would ring in your ears for blocks and blocks. (These were the shops for the mines, not far off.) As you passed, black-faced men would glance out at you, with their white eyes, mouths wide-open, wondering, no doubt, what a lady could be doing down that street,—but on I went; too much inspired by my errand to mind all this;—on, on, over railroad tracks and

Finding the Bud

street car tracks, part of the way boards for sidewalks, laid lengthwise (just wide enough for two, provided the two were one), part of the way cinders, the remaining portion sand, deep and many colored. There were steps up and steps down, while two streams of muddy water, coming from opposite directions, one red, quite red, the other black, joined hands just above the bridge I was crossing, making a very curious sight, as though they had decided to run under it together; no doubt to generously save the city the trouble of building two bridges.

This bridge, like many people in this world, was destined to bear many burdens, as steam cars, street cars, and footmen all crossed it,—yes, and even men without feet, for I saw one there, on crutches, who had no feet of his own, but some wooden

My Little Arbutus Flower

things some carpenter had made him. Surely I had gone far enough, I thought, and began to look around.

Across the road, in a sand pile, were some dirty children at play. I crossed, asked for the place I was seeking, and they pointed out, not far away, a dingy, little, forsaken-looking black,—what? A house? No! I'll let you name it. It was just under the sheltering wing of an army of mine buildings, where they were blasting rock in order to get at the precious metal. All the buildings around had been battered with these great pieces of rock, and this one, which I was about to enter, had not fully escaped. A window in the end of this place next to me had an old, yellow newspaper (torn, too) for a curtain. It seemed to me strange, that they could not have had a clean one.

Finding the Bud

I had to go down several steps from the road, to reach the door, which was on the side of the house. The opposite end of the house, if such is the name for those black boards, was set upon a scantling, to keep it from associating with a ditch near-by. I rapped—I happened to have on gloves which were somewhat soiled, and I was not sorry. We are sometimes led by a kind providence to do the very right thing at the right time. This was evidently one of those times.

*The door was opened. Oh, what a sight!
What shall I say to you? How shall I
write it?*

*Do you suppose the half could be told?
Oh, the black darkness, the filth and the
wretchedness;
The odor, the dampness, the grime and the
mould.*

In one corner stood,—what do you suppose? A piano!

“Oh consistency, thou art a jewel!” and Mrs. Inconsistency, what art thou? Surely it came from Noah’s Ark,—though they say Noah did not know enough to have a piano. Well, if this woman had known enough to have had the Ark, instead of the piano, I need not have written this story. Such a sight!

The piano was piled three feet high with old, soiled clothing,—old rags and scraps of every kind, including music,—this kind with the glaring frontispiece—novels, old and yellow, yet retaining their extravagant pictures, and of the ten-cent order.

A bed was the nearest neighbor. “A bed,” did I say? A pile of filthy rags, besmeared with black coal-dust (and it might have been a mattress) adorned

another piece of Noah's furniture. My eyes did not dwell upon this scene, so cannot tell you more. Where did they linger in this most dismal of all dismal apartments? Upon the face and hands of the woman who bade me enter. "Were they clean," do you say? "Clean?" Yes; and pink and white, like a sea shell. "Was she intelligent?" again I hear you ask,—even so! I imagine now you are wondering!

EVEN SO DID I

*I wondered and wondered, and finally
thought,—*

*I never did read it, nor e'er heard it taught,
That such a bright blossom could grow in
the dark,*

*Where the sun could not reach it; nor spar-
row nor lark*

*Could glance down from their place in
the tree;*

*And I thought it was queer; just as queer
as could be!*

*And ne'er had I heard one could speak their
mind*

Even So Did I

*To a blossom in such a dense wood, but
I find*

*My mind I did speak,—I would do so, too,
For in order to help her, her story must
know.*

*Just then the door opened and boldly
walked in*

*A Miss about fourteen, tall, shabby and
thin;*

*“Hungry?” Yes, starved-looking, weary
and pale.*

*She stood and gazed wildly. I thought,
“O, how frail!”*

My Little Arbutus Flower

*I wonder if this a daughter can be? Wonders she why I came?
What thinks she of me?*

*“Dear Grace,” said the mother, “this friend came to me,
To see if your mother would work for her,
(do fancy-work); see?”*

*“Now, go and get brother; the wind is so cold,
And close the door after you, dear,—*

*Just thirteen years old!”
I must now put my question, before they come in,—*

Even So Did I

*"And have you another?" What a wonder!
and then*

*The door opened. What a scene met my
gaze!*

*I ne'er can forget it; sure your nerves it
would craze.*

*With love in her eyes, Grace led by the
hand*

*A ragged young urchin, all black and all
sand.*

*He was dressed in a night pants made of
red calico;*

*All dirty and ragged. "No patches?" Oh,
no!*

My Little Arbutus Flower

*This is one of the secrets I'll reveal bye
and bye;*

*Give me time, though, for I must now
speak of the sigh*

*Which arose on the lips of the child as he
gazed at me then,*

*With his blue eyes so wild it is clear past
my pen!*

*Those eyes looked like violets, peeping out
from the leaves,*

*And waiting the garner to gather his
sheaves.*

*The long hair was heavy, and curly, and
gold,*

Even So Did I

*But the dross must be washed away, ere it
grows cold!*

*Could I help to do it? "Oh, God, give me
power,*

*Thy love to speak, here, in this most
wretched hour!"*

*Will you pardon me for telling the story
in rhyme?*

*I've started out bravely in prose, often-
time,*

*But somehow with heart-strings, it does
not accord;*

*And it sounds so unkindly, the plain,
homely word,*

*To describe such scenes. Aye, sad scenes
or glad,*

May best, in the rhythm of spirit be had.

*The mother said: "Grace, dear, go wash
him up clean;*

*So the lady can see him; so he won't look
so mean."*

*Now my question once more, to the mother
I'd bring:*

*"No one will disturb us?" "No, no, not
a thing."*

*"Come, tell me, my dear, what has brought
you down here?*

*I can't understand it!" Now I have
brought a sad tear . . .*

*"But never mind, dearie, we are sisters of
God.*

*The squalor, the sorrow, the dirt or the sod
Can't part God's dear children; just lift
your great load.*

*God sent me to help you, and I'll do my
best,*

*If you will but tell me, just how you came
West.*

*Your culture I see, and your home is not
here;*

*Don't sob so; take this, now, and wipe that
big tear.*

*Let's reason together; see what can be
done;*

*Most surely there's comfort! Oh, here
comes the son!"*

*Is my prayer being answered, already?
Now, see!*

He looks like an angel; so beautiful, he!

*The long, golden tresses had nicely been
combed;*

*The violets, just budded, most surely had
bloomed;*

Even So Did I

*And as they grow lighter you know, from
the sun,*

*So these had done also; their depths re-
vealed fun;—*

*But his whole bearing seemed like the
Arbutus flower,*

*So pink and so white, in its leaf-covered
bower.*

*He came to shake hands with me, and then
kissed me, too.*

*What beautiful hands! What sweet lips
they were, too.*

My Little Arbutus Flower

*I wanted to fold him my arms quite
around;*

*To take him away with me; but the heart
it would wound*

*Of the mother, who sat there, with pride in
her eyes.*

But now I must go, and quickly arise.

*She said: "Must you go now?" "I cer-
tainly must,*

*But I will call again, early, next week; let
us trust."*

*"Oh, thank you," she cried, and I bade her
adieu.*

Even So Did I

The little boy wanted to go with me, too.

*"Just a little way, darling, now, do not
go far;*

*Don't bother the lady; of yourself take
good care,*

*Don't go near the cars, now, nor near
naughty boys;*

*Just down to the corner, and list for the
noise*

*Of the blasting-man's whistle, and run for
the house,*

As soon as you hear it, as fast as a mouse."

*So we walked along slowly, his pink hand
in mine,—*

My Little Arbutus Flower

*My Arbutus Flower, and his face it did
shine.*

*Not a word did he say, but the love in his
eyes,*

*Any lover might covet; any lady might
prize.*

*He would look into mine, from the depths
of his soul.*

*Oh, it thrills my heart yet, and I long for
the whole*

Of that story so gloomy and dark

*That held in its bosom such a bright, shin-
ing spark.*

*My hand he held closely, he turned not
to fly;*

Even So Did I

*He seemed to so linger and stay so close
by,—*

*I asked him a question; he simply said,
“No,*

Back there I don’t want to go.”

*Keeping hold of my hand, till my heart was
like lead.*

*I said: “Darling, you must go.” He hung
down his head.*

*He wished to go with me, my Arbutus
Flower,—*

*But the rain-drops were coming; the clouds
they did lower.*

*Both within and without, it was storming,
I mean;*

My Little Arbutus Flower

*And here on the corner, in the sand, was
a scene.*

*But I kissed him so fondly and promised
to come*

*To that home again soon, and he ran along
home.*

*I turned not to look, for my heart was so
sore.*

*(Of thy wisdom, our Father, we surely
need more*

*To cope with the sorrow, oppression, and
sin,*

*And bring the dear children the heaven
gates within!*

*O give us this wisdom, and teach us to love;
And send forth Thy great light, from Thy
kingdom above!)*

Even So Did I

*I'll not soon forget that lone walk to my
home;*

*The thunder did roar and the lightning did
come.*

*The day grew so dark, and the night fast
came on.*

Oh what was my Arbutus Flower lying on?

*Where 'bout was his curly head lying to
rest?*

*What touched his soft cheek, and was he
caressed?*

*Could his slumber be sweet, in that dark,
wretched place?*

*Yes, for I am sure heaven had looked on
that beautiful face!*

My Little Arbutus Flower

*I thought that his prayers he surely had
said,*

*For the mother had told me to Him she
had prayed,—*

*But I wanted him nestled all down in a bed,
In a clean little night-robe, and blankets
all red.*

*For the night was so cold, and the little
heart warm;*

*And my Arbutus Flower must be kept
from all harm.*

*I prayed for that home there, and soon fell
asleep.*

*I cannot write more now, or I surely will
weep.*

THE BLOSSOM EXPANDS

As the brotherhood of man is becoming more universally understood, and as this story must needs include a moral, and as you have so urgently requested me to proceed, I will endeavor to put the sad experience into words; but blame me not if the heart is caused to quake and tremble, neither if the words imperfectly express the intended meaning. I shall trust you to read between the lines, and if the heart is made to ache, or its strings to become suddenly all out of tune, may this only impel you to at once put them in perfect tune again ("In tune with the Infinite"), that you may be able to uplift the fallen and support the weak.

I performed my regular studio duties very restlessly the next few days, and was

My Little Arbutus Flower

glad when, on Tuesday, I could find time for the promised call.

I sent word in the morning that I would be there, and at what hour, so that I might have an understanding with the mother; and that I might speak with her alone and discover the mystery surrounding her life, in order to help her up out of that wretched place, and thereby, too, bring my sweet Arbutus Flower out into the sunshine. When two o'clock came, my feet hastened down over the bridges, past the blear-eyed men in the shops, who looked as though they remembered me, and wondered what I might be doing down that way again,—but my heart had such a big prayer in it, and such an overwhelming sense of that charity that “thinketh no evil,” that I could see in them only God's earnest, faithful sons, my brothers; so with

a warm, loving thought for them, hoping that their homes were cozy and warm, and that their labor was repaid at home in the right coin, I passed rapidly on.

Strange-looking men were met, some from the mines, and some who looked as though their thoughts were very sinful, so that their visages were marked up and plainly to be read, gazed at me boldly,—but again: “The Kingdom of God is within you,” would come to me, and this “still, small voice” enabled me to proceed. I could not help but “keep an out” for my little Arbutus Flower, but saw him not, and soon arrived at the little black place. A new paper had been pinned up at the window, and the window washed.

I rapped. All was still; very still. What could this mean? I repeated the rap. No sound from within, only the noise of the

many cars without, and the blast-man's whistle.

I knew I must soon seek shelter now somewhere away from those awful rocks (five minutes were always allowed in which to give people time to seek shelter).

I looked along the platform upon which I stood, and which was in the direction of the deep, dark ditch, or rather ravine, and which platform looked positively dangerous, dangling there in air upon its frail legs (the scantling), and I saw another door. I stepped along to this, with somewhat of a doubt in my mind as to whether or not I might be intruding,—but I was determined to ferret out the cause of the distress if possible. I rapped; there was a rush to be heard. The door was opened quickly, and within was a sight to behold.

“Was it the kitchen?” I hear you ask.

The Blossom Expands

Perhaps you might call it that. Here were the mother, daughter and son, all engaged in making the most of about a pint of very dirty water, in a wash basin as black as the “ace of spades,” cleaning the little Arbutus Flower up, “to see the lady.” He had pleaded that this might be done, and now the girl would finish getting the snarls out of his beautiful hair. While she combed and pulled, he stood like a martyr—not a sound passing his lips, and with no look of pain casting a shadow over his face. He said:

“The lady will want to see me clean,” and he lavished upon me those heart-stirring looks from the deep heaven of his soul; and occasionally they would scintillate with a ripple of fun that seemed to say:

“I have never had expression; but I see

My Little Arbutus Flower

in you a chance for escape.” He seemed to have a bright hope that his cage-door was going to be opened, and the hope of a child is so redolent with strong, uplifting faith that shall it not be answered? Oh, how sweet he was!

Who could help loving such a blossom of God? He had on the same night-pants; just as dirty,—no more so. They could not be. “Just as many holes?” Yes. “No patches yet?” No.

“Why?” I wonder. You shall know; be patient.

I wished that the little feet might be washed, too, but did not like to ask it. I wanted to see them, for there is nothing prettier. (I am glad God is the Creator, and not man.)

All done, now, and I shall never forget the transformation; neither the look, as

The Blossom Expands

he advanced one step, with such an easy grace, and the question beaming from his eyes:

“Do you love me now? May I kiss you now?” I bade him to come to me, and giving me both his little pink hands, he put up his red lips to kiss me. I think he would have liked to be taken into my arms, but both realized that this could not be, and he glanced at the filthy garment, and then at his mother, and the look upon his face no artist could depict.

The mother, taking me into the “other room,” showed me some of the most beautiful embroidery I had ever seen; center-pieces that were superb; violets, the color of Arbutus’ eyes,—carnations like Arbutus’ cheeks, woven on linen white as his lily-like throat. She was evidently a lover of the beautiful, and *how could* she live in

My Little Arbutus Flower

this place? My question, again. I *must* see her alone,—so after turning over in my mind, how this was to be accomplished, I asked her if the children might go and bring a piece of fancy-work she had been telling me of, which she had done for a lady not far from there. She was perfectly willing, and they departed. I proceeded to bring my question again, now.

As soon as the door closed upon these two, and waiting for no preliminaries, I said: “It is not necessary for you to live in this way!”

I had made up my mind that promptness contained many virtues, and I meant to proceed at the risk of any and everything, now, if for no other reason than to open the cage-door for my Arbutus Flower. He trusted me, too, I knew it; and God, mayhap, had made me an instrument to

The Blossom Expands

accomplish this task; and I meant to fulfill my mission. She burst into tears.

“Don’t cry,” I said. “We must talk fast; you know the children will soon return, and must not hear this conversation. You do beautiful, wonderful work! You can support these two with your needle. I have many friends who would gladly purchase your needle-work at good prices. I will tell them of you and your work, and when you get into respectable quarters, will bring them to see you. I will help you, and God will surely protect you.” Here she shuddered. I asked, did she belong to any church? “Yes,” she replied.

“Do they not help you?”

“Yes, they are kind!”

“Do you not know that God is able to help you?”

“Oh, you do not know all; I have two

My Little Arbutus Flower

other boys, both working out, at not very respectable work, and what the world would call a husband."

"Where is he?"

"Mercy! You tell me! He has been intoxicated for two weeks now, steadily—drunk more than sober."

"Does he not provide?" She shook her head and the tears chased each other down her cheeks.

"How long has this been going on?"

"Always, from the very first."

"Did you not know that he drank when you married him?"

"I knew that he drank, a little, but I—I—I—thou—I thought he would stop after we were married, but the habit has grown worse and worse," and she sobbed bitterly.

IN FULL BLOOM

I tried to lead her to tell me the cause of her marriage to such a person, and being brought to such a condition, but she put up the self reserve firmly, each time. She said that she had prayed and prayed for all these years that release might come, and she believed that it would yet come. I saw that something was being hidden from me and that all I could do was to pray and trust in the prayer, too. She told me how thankful she was to me—and then the children came. My departure was taken then, being an exact counterpart of the first, and I promised to come again, as she had agreed to do some fancy-work for me, and in the meantime she was to try and know that the time had come for the answer to her many prayers.

My Little Arbutus Flower

*"It lays like lead in my bosom—this sad
experience of mine—*

*And I longed for wisdom from heaven as
the branches long for the vine."*

Not a day and scarcely an hour passed, I think I can safely say, that I did not think of that night of life—of that desolate home. Desolate of what? What makes desolation all the night of life there is? All the discord? All the suffering? Lack of love—nothing more! True love, the love that the Lord teaches, pure and true!

One day while at work in my studio the little Miss of thirteen rapped at my door. She had come out of the gloom to ask me to come to her Mama, if I would—her Mama wanted me “so awful bad.” I told her I would come “Was any one sick?” “Papa has been sick and so have I.”

“Is little brother well?”

“Oh, yes; he is never sick.” I knew why the little Arbutus Flower was never sick—the light in his eyes had revealed that to

My Little Arbutus Flower

me—At-one with God—his life, filled with love.

I went, that afternoon, adown the old, long, winding way again. I hoped to find the father. When I arrived, however, he had gone up town.

She took me into the kitchen, as the daughter was in “the other room.” My Arbutus Flower was not there. I did not see him that day. She said:

“I have been so ill all day I thought I would die.” I *must* open my heart to you or I cannot live. I cannot stand this; oh, I cannot! You must never, never tell what I tell you, or it costs me my life, and yours too—but I believe you can and will help me.”

I bade her proceed and to be assured that I would not speak it aloud and would try to help her. The tale of woe she poured

forth is too horrible to relate in full—heart-rending—repelling. Worse than beastly had this man, or, rather, brute, been to that beautiful woman!

In the first place, when a girl, in a far eastern city, where she was surrounded with every luxury, in a beautiful home, the only daughter of fond parents, he had stolen her and carried her thousands of miles away, forever telling her that she was watched all the time, night and day; that he paid men to do this, and if she dare tell, or try to get away, she would be hid away where no one could find her! He told her he had planned this and it would be done. All these years she had prayed and tried to get brave enough to face her fate—to try to escape, but the faces of her little ones had caused her to bear this awful fate thus long, all these long years

My Little Arbutus Flower

upon years! She said he would often take her by the hair of her head and drag her about the floor if she attempted to refuse to obey him. This morning she had said:

“I hate you! Oh, how I hate you! I will go away! I will not bear it any longer!” He had wrenched her wrist and held a loaded revolver at her throat, saying:

“You do that, if you dare, but remember what will happen to you if you try that!”

It turned me sick. Oh, how I did pity that poor woman. I thought the authorities ought to know this and take care of him, and said so.

“I can’t prove it,” she said. “What could we do?” I only know of one thing to do—only one place to go. We must *fully know* that only God could help her.

In Full Bloom

I would go home and pray for her, and she must *know* her release would come.

I visited that desolate home often. The father came home less and less.

The little mother had to carry all her large washings three blocks away, where she could get water, fuel, soap and all the necessary things to do with, in return for doing the other woman's washing, on the same day, doing the former in the forenoon and her own large ones in the afternoon. The materials for doing her own washing and the privilege of hanging her clothes on the lady's line was all the pay she received for her work.

She could not carry water except for drinking purposes and cooking. The three (father and two sons—pardon me, I could not call them men), would not do so. This accounts partly for the filth, but not

My Little Arbutus Flower

wholly, and now, without my telling you, you must have surmised the mystery of the unpatched and soiled garments. It takes energy to put patches on *clean* garments; much more on filthy ones. It takes energy and life to patch for and keep bright a happy home—much more such a one; and this poor woman had lost nearly every particle of that precious gift of heaven.

She could weave the sunshine of her heart into beautiful flowers on the white linen. Thus she expressed a hint of that inborn nature which helped disclose a secret to me—the sorrows of a life. The imprisoned bird had fought long and bitterly against its fate, beating its wings remorselessly against the sides of its wire cage. Would she soon be released? We shall see.

Finally women began to go there for fancy-work, and not long afterwards the little black thing called a house was desolate and forsaken for a house—a *home* away out in the light, up on a high hill, in the most beautiful part of the city, as far as natural scenery is concerned. Thus away up the mountain, in a good neighborhood, among the wonderful pine trees, all decorated with their green dresses, our dear friends found a home!

Nothing was taken from that other wretched place, not a thing. A clean rug carpet adorned the living room floor, and nice, fresh matting the others. Some clean willow chairs were scattered about, while there was pure spring water to be had, in great abundance. Here in this wholesome home the daughter grew strong, doing all the housework so her mother could work

My Little Arbutus Flower

with her needle. She also went to school. Work came to the mother, more rapidly than she could do it, and the money was paid freely, thus enabling them to buy and pay for the home, in monthly payments.

You ask what became of the man we call father, and the boys? This is the strange part of the story. No one ever knew. The mother just overcame her fear of him and when again he threatened to shoot her, holding a revolver to her throat, she stood perfectly still and said:

“Shoot!”

She said she was not in the least afraid; only pity filled her heart.

She told him twice to “shoot,” and he turned and fled. She never saw him again. Neither did she ever see the two boys again, who were like their father. Three on the dark side—the side of hell; three on the light side—the side of heaven!

Hasten to thy brother's rescue; fear not anywhere to go.

Life is earnest; there's a duty that you must not fail to do.

Now the blossom that did nestle in the weeds that dismal day

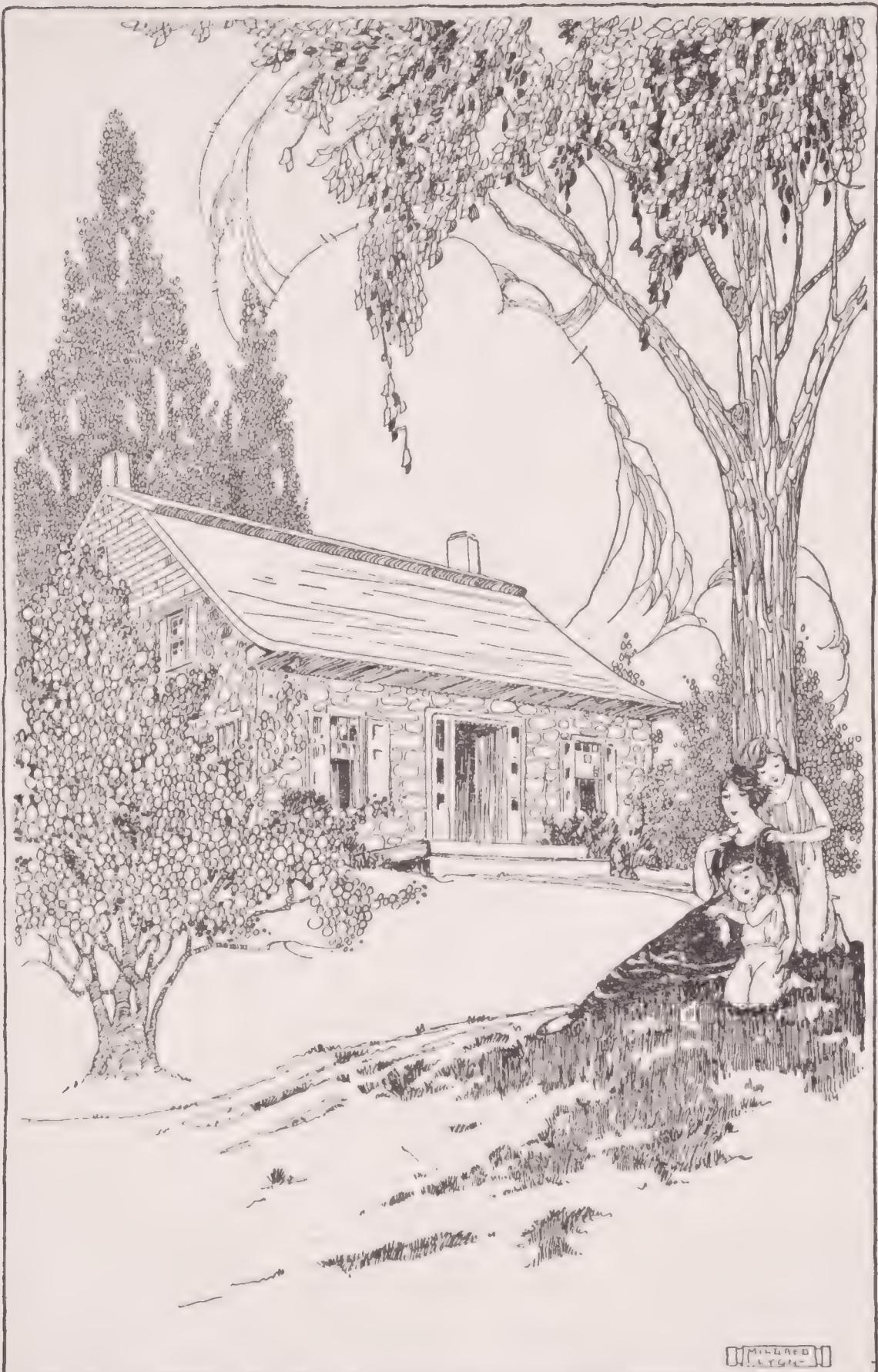
Can expand and be a leader to the realm of perfect day!

Fear not, then, to help the fallen; God is with you all the way.

He it is who sends you onward; He has taught you how to pray.

Proverbs 13, 10

***"The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
The righteous runneth into it and is safe!"***



OUR DEAR FRIENDS FOUND A HOME

MILDRED
WILCOX

WHEN BERNICE FOUND HER PROPER NICHE

(Conclusion)

After reading the story through, Bernice waited breathlessly for her mother's approval or disapproval. Mrs. Blair laid one hand on the head of wavy, blonde hair and gently said:

"Dearie, the story to me is beautiful; both because my daughter wrote it and because I hear therein the accents of her father, who so shortly ago went to his long home, as well as because I knew the beautiful 'Arbutus Flower' and his mother, and your loving interest in them, but I am as anxious for you not to be disappointed in the prize as you are; and to have you at home, and since we seem to see a possible chance, it seems to be a picture of comfort not to be lost. I am wondering if the story

My Little Arbutus Flower

of that western scenery and your artistic friend would not interest these good editors, too. Some day you could give them that."

"Well, mother, I will prepare this one and try that one next. Tomorrow I will get it ready at home, try to rewrite it carefully; and then I'll ask my employer, if I may, at odd moments, make a typewritten copy, so as to send it in in proper shape. They must be typewritten, you know."

The next evening Bernice asked her mother to excuse her and she retired to her room. Twelve o'clock found the copy of her story carefully rewritten, plainly, in long-hand. The following day, by working an hour overtime, she managed to bring home a neat type-written copy, ready for the publishers. She mailed it, enclosing sufficient postage for its return,

When Bernice Found Her Proper Niche

should it not please, and then she and her dear mother waited happily, expectantly, with a vision of a peaceful, bright future before them.

Two weeks went by—three, four. Then one morning when Bernice was too ill to go to the office work, which was the case often for the last few months, a letter came. Her mother brought it to her as she sat bolstered up in the reclining chair, so pale, and somewhat worried looking, and with her hair falling loosely about her shoulders, reaching nearly to the floor. Her large blue eyes were radiant with a great hope; her heart began to throb rapidly, and the hectic flush deepened in her cheeks. She said: “Open it, mother,” for she guessed what it was.

The mother, with trembling fingers and a prayer on her lips, tore open the envelope,

unfolding its contents, and giving one little scream of joy, laid it in her daughter's lap. Bernice only had to glance at it to behold a bank draft for a goodly sum.

"Oh, mother!" cried Bernice, and they were folded in each other's arms.

"Now, daughter, rest. Now we know that you will recover your health. We will stay quietly at home together, just visiting the parks sometimes, and I will embroider, while you may write, and we will do our work together. Oh, how thankful I am to those dear editors, and we will send some more beautiful stories. We will write the stories of our lives for them, too, and that will be pleasing to them, when they find that they, perhaps, have been the means of saving your dear life and enabling us to make an honest living, besides giving us the pleasure of expressing our real selves

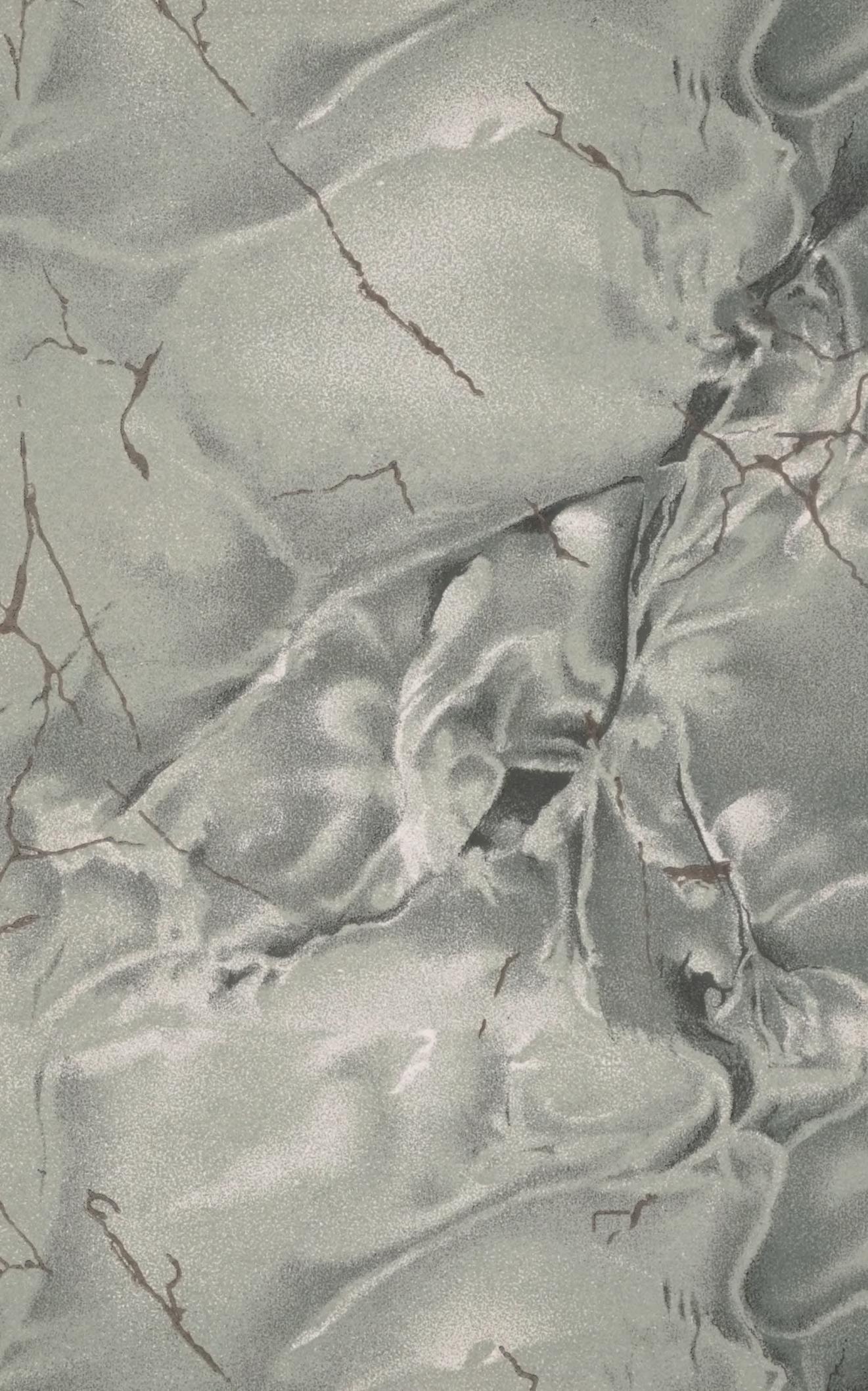
When Bernice Found Her Proper Niche

in the true and good, and helping others. Think how many poor girls and men and women can do the same, for so much talent is really unexpressed, and people need the interesting and uplifting stories. Let us retire, now, with thankful hearts, and awake in a new world of beauty, peace and light, far from want and the crowded city."

*Peace, the fruit of conquered sin,
Opens the heavenly gates. Within
We find the life of love
Which blessing comes from God above.*

—*Harriet Beecher Benbow.*

F I N I S





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